MUAY BORAN IMBA'S TRAINING SYSTEM

ARJARN MARCO DE CESARIS' PHILOSOPHY OF FIGHTING

VOLUME 2

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Muay Boran IMBA
(มวย โบราณ IMBA)

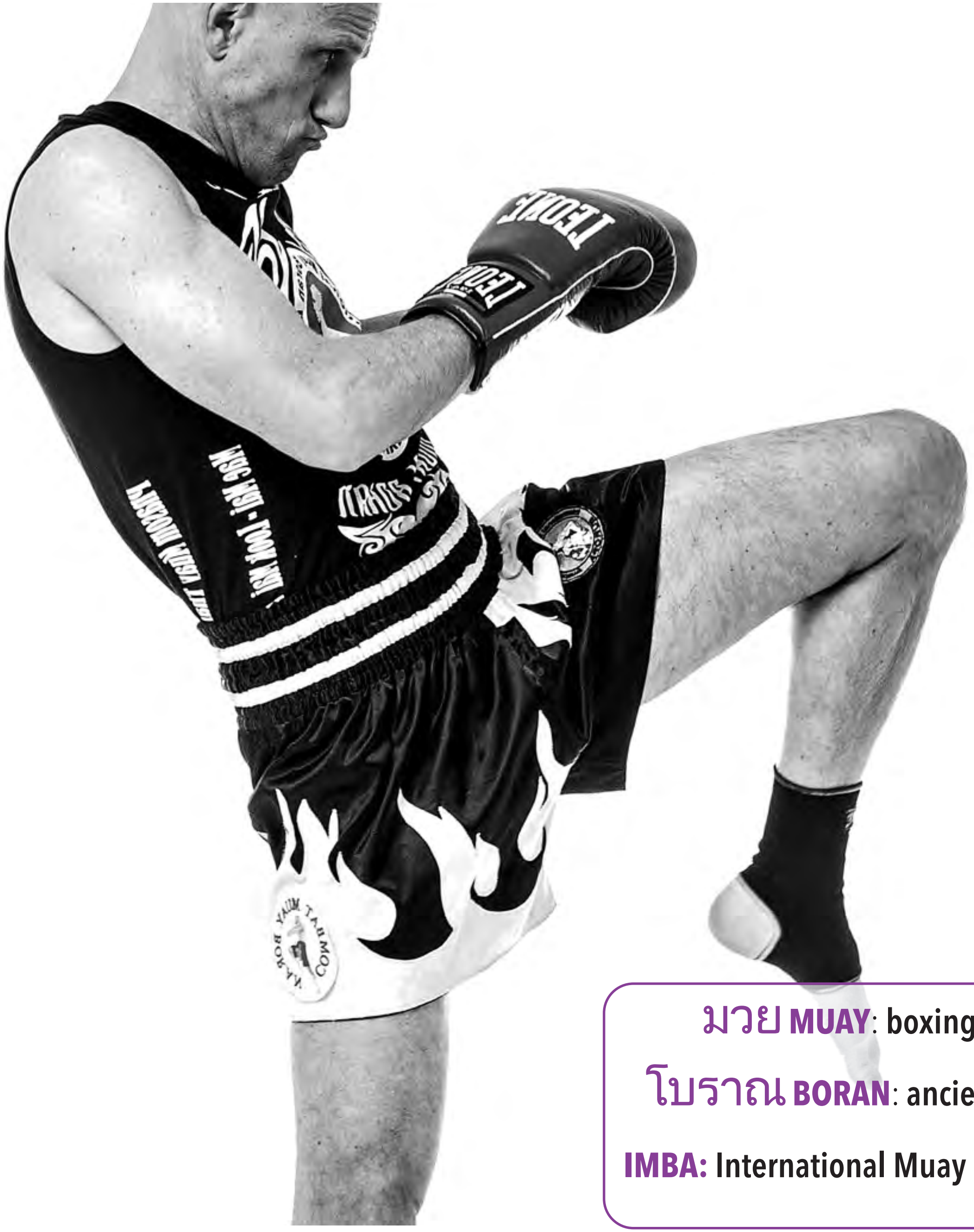
Arjarn Marco De Cesaris' philosophy of fighting

VOLUME 2

IMBA'S TRAINING SYSTEM

This book is dedicated to thai Grand Master Chaisawat Tienvinboon.
His absolute mastery of Muay, his free spirit and his cleverness
in applying ancient knowledge to modern times' needs, have been
the model to follow for the last ten years.
His courage inspires me every day to overcome my limits:
that's the greatest lesson Arjan Chaisawat has taught me.
And for this reason, I will always respect and honor him.

Marco De Cesaris



มวย **MUAY**: boxing, fighting

โบราณ **BORAN**: ancient, traditional

IMBA: International Muay Boran Academy

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MUAY BORAN IMBA'S TRAINING SYSTEMS: THE FOUR PILLARS

Working out is a crucial element in every Muay Thai Boran practitioner's instruction, in order to reach and maintain a superior fighting shape. Learning to perform the techniques without having the physical and mental attributes to put them into practice effectively is an unnecessary waste of time.

Too many martial artists limit their training sessions to "complicated" self-defense maneuvers without caring about their overall physical conditioning; in many cases they don't worry about reproducing in their workouts the psycho-physical stress that becomes one of the main hindering factors in the event of a ring contest or a street fight.

No practitioner will ever reach a satisfying level, nor can he call himself a Nak Muay (Thai boxer) without spending time on a regular basis developing endurance, speed, strength, conditioning his bones and tendons and working out with sparring partners who try their best to make trouble for him.

At the same time, however, it is important to distinguish between a training aimed at reaching peak performance at a given time on the occasion of a special event (i.e. competitions, tournaments) and what we might call "training for life." In the first case, a good coach must

bring the athlete to the limit of his possibilities by calculating that the top shape condition must be reached exactly at the time of the scheduled performance.
Right after the contest, the athlete's state of shape will tend to decrease, thus allowing his physiological recovery, before starting a new intensive training phase. This cycle will be repeated for a variable number of times until the end of the sports career of the athlete.

Given that not everyone is fit to undergo the rigors of a competitive career, especially in hard combat sports such as Muay Thai, even the most gifted athlete cannot stand the workload needed to reach the level of fitness required to fight at a high level indefinitely (considering the physical injuries connected to the practice of extreme sports).

The "training for life" system, on the contrary, must be structured in order to become an integral part of the daily life of any martial artist; at all times of the year, the physical training system illustrated here can be used as the basis for the daily workouts of an average Muay Thai Boran practitioner, young or mature. At specific times, the workload may be increased or decreased to meet the changing needs of the trainee, but training must never be neglected.

Only in this way it is possible to maintain a level of fitness that, at any moment, allows the practitioner to properly apply the technical principles of the Siamese Warriors.

In this volume, the interested reader will find the general guidelines for reaching and maintaining a good level of conditioning, as required for Muay Boran IMBA's practice.

The following four pillars form the bedrock of IMBA's training system:

- **Physical conditioning**
- **Impact training**
- **Sparring**
- **Combat Forms**

Using these guidelines as a starting point, each instructor will have to determine individual routines for his students' training. It must be noted that the use of standardized training schedules identical for all kinds of athletes, must be avoided. No individual is equal to another and what is optimal for an athlete may be excessive or insufficient for another.

Moreover, while Muay Thai is by definition an individual activity, in training in a Kai Muay (Muay Thai Gym), the 'team' element plays a fundamental role.

Thai Masters express this concept with the saying "Khru Puk Luk Chum" which literally means learning through observation of others.

According to many scholars of boxing techniques this part of learning is actually just as important as the supervision and advice given directly by the Master. Observing seniors who undergo strenuous physical activity without stopping and showing no sign of fatigue, represents for new students a priceless experience.

Continuous contact with expert practitioners teaches how to totally focus one's mind during the various stages of a given training session.

TRADITIONAL VS. MODERN TRAINING SYSTEMS

The first distinction that has to be made pertains to the difference between traditional training systems and modern training methods. The latter have been adapted from International Boxing: in recent years, from the 1920 onwards, thai teachers borrowed training methods from the western tradition and cleverly adapted them to Muay Thai boxers' needs.
On the other hand, ancient Muay's training methods have been in use for hundreds of years, long before the introduction of western boxing in Thailand.

Some of those archaic systems are as follows:

- **Using** a loin cloth called **Pa Khao Ma** hung from the neck to bind the fists. Alternative fists were punched out in accordance with the stepping feet (left punch with left foot forward, right punch with right foot forward).

- **Punching**, elbowing aiming at a series of small limes, hanging from a tree branch.

- **Jogging** on a riverbank, first in ankle-deep and then in knee-deep water.

- **Kicking** a banana trunk of 5-6 inches in diameter, about 3 feet long. The trainee had to kick the trunk, alternating the kicking legs, so as not to let the trunk fall to the ground.

- **Punching**, elbowing, kicking and kneeing big banana trees. (drawing 5)

- **Walking** a long distance carrying heavy weights (such as water filled pots). (drawing 3)

- **Swimming**

- **Diving**

- **Running** on grass

1

2

3

- **Hitting** water with elbows, hands, while standing in waist deep water, in order to strengthen arms and learning not to blink when attacked.

- **Grinding** rice in a big pod, with a heavy wooden rod. (drawing 1)

- **Hitting** coconuts floating on water with punches and elbow strikes. (drawing 2)

4

- **Chopping** wood. (drawing 6)

- **Beating** iron with a hammer (blacksmith style)

- **Climbing** sugar palm trees. (drawing 4)

A modern Muay Boran IMBA practitioner is directed towards a training routine that harmoniously blends both approaches. The result is a complete training system that is able to forge all-round martial artists.

5

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THE GUIDELINES OF MUAY BORAN IMBA'S TRAINING SYSTEM ARE ILLUSTRATED IN THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS.

BODY MECHANICS

Muay Thai boxers are renowned for their ability to express great power in all their offensive actions: but what are the keys to unlocking the secrets of Muay Thai's powerful strikes?

In order to be able to fully understand the secret of such effectiveness it is necessary to clarify the key concepts on which the execution of the technical gestures of a good thai boxer is founded. Let's take a closer look at those key points.

- **Understanding Kinetic Energy**

Kinetic Energy represents the energy connected to motion. In Physics it is represented by the following formula:
.

$$KE=1/2\ mv^2$$

In simple words this means that the energy produced is proportional to the mass (m) and the square of the velocity (v). Therefore, in order to increase the Kinetic Energy output, both factors must be increased, if possible.

However, since a slight increase in velocity produces a great increase in the Kinetic Energy's level (since the value of velocity in the formula is raised to the square), the faster your strike (be it a punch, kick, knee or elbow blow) the greater the power you'll express. In other words, if you want your blows to be harder, work on the velocity of your maneuvers. As the old saying goes: "beware, velocity can kill!" .

On the other hand, in order to exploit one's own mass at the highest level, during the execution of all offensive techniques a fighter has to transfer into his blow as much body mass as possible. This is accomplished by moving into the target every time the situation allows: this is why all thai boxers learn how to step and strike whenever they deliver their blows. If the distance is short, the step will be short but it will still be executed whenever a blow is thrown.

- **Perfecting balance in motion**

In all Muay Thai schools, the technical training begins with the execution of maneuvers performed on the spot: the boxer's balance is trained starting in a comfortable situation.
After that, Yang Saam Khum (three points walk) is introduced: it is taught at this stage how to maintain balance in dynamic situations. This key point is often overlooked by many athletes: on the contrary, the ability to maintain perfect balance during the execution of forward, backward or lateral movements is the essential prerequisite for the execution of powerful strikes.

- **Impulse**

Impulse, or the product of a force by the time over which that force is applied, is what separates a simple push from a real damaging strike.
The shorter the time the force is applied onto the designated target, the harder the blow.
Your goal must be to transfer all your energy to the target and to instantly change the direction of that energy, snapping back your limb; this will allow the force of your blow to penetrate inside the target, without transforming your striking action into a mere push.
Most knock outs are the direct result of blows that generate maximum impulse.

- **Developing penetrating force**

All thai boxers are taught to strike "through" the target, since the very beginning of their learning process.
Of course this doesn't mean that they have to make a hole in their opponent's body: in reality it is the boxer's mind that is expected to visualize a target which is beyond the actual position of the opponent.
If your minds leads you to mentally "penetrate" the target, your blow will pack considerably more force than a similar strike aimed at the surface of the opponent's body.

- **Correct breathing**

Proper breathing is one of the keys to powerful strikes: it helps to connect the body to the ground, giving better stability to the executioner.
All thai boxers learn quickly how to breath out with great force when they deliver a blow.
The core muscles are contracted as air is expelled: the body is "unified" and totally backs up the striking action, increasing the blow's destructive power.

Muay Thai's ten basic ways of body weapons' use

Muay Thai's arsenal is rich and diversified: the body weapons (**Gaya Awooth**) can be employed in many ways, allowing the executioner to attack his opponent from every distance.

Long range weapons are represented by kicks, **middle range weapons** are punches and knee strikes, **short range weapons** are knees and elbows.

Among the many techniques of attack, some are more significant, since they represent the basic ways of employment of arms and legs.
For each of the basic attacks illustrated, a schematic description of the crucial elements needed to execute a powerful blow, is given.
Each link of the kinetic chain is analysed, in order to clarify how powerful blows can be obtained.
It is of paramount importance to understand that in all of the following attacking techniques, power is generated from a firm root.
In fact, as a general rule, power is generated by the legs (the root), transmitted to the waist (and hips) from where it is propelled to the limbs for striking. It must be remembered that in the execution of both arm and leg strikes, the waist must move first, leaving the upper or lower limbs a split second behind. When the striking limb finally catches up with the waist, it will be propelled like a bullet, generating huge power.

This is the key to executing strong punches, kicks, knee or elbow blows.

MAHD TRONG, STRAIGHT PUNCH

Key elements
1. *back leg's forefoot pushes downward and turns (heel is raised) (1)*
2. *back leg is straightened and pushes downward (A)*
3. *hips turn (2)*
4. *shoulders turn (3)*
5. *punching arm is straightened*

MAHD WIANG SAN, HOOK PUNCH

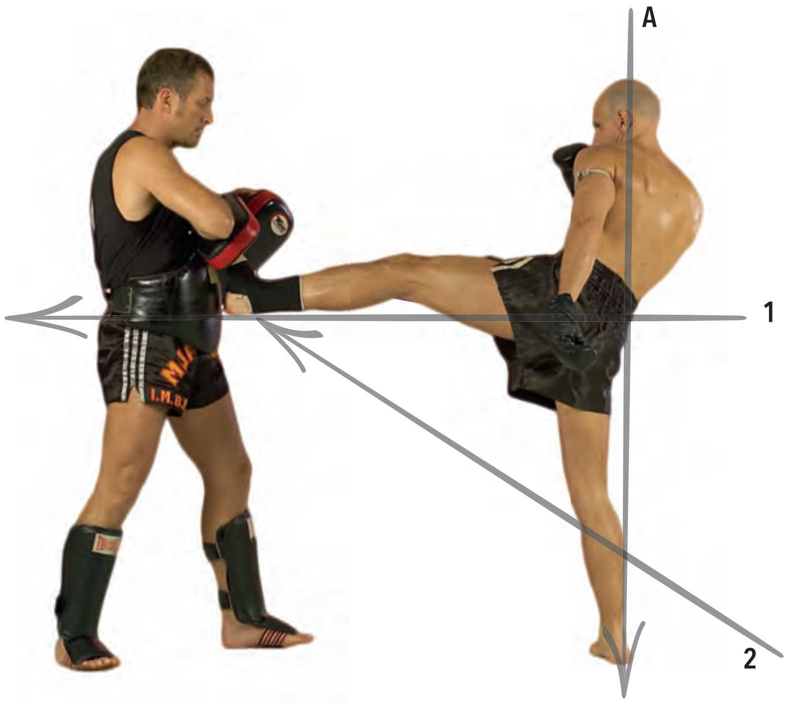
Key elements

1. *front leg's forefoot pushes downward and turns (heel is raised) (1)*
2. *weight is shifted over the back leg*
3. *front leg is straightened and pushes downward (A)*
4. *hips turn (2)*
5. *shoulders turn (3)*
6. *punching arm is whipped horizontally in an arc*

MAHD SUHY, UPPERCUT PUNCH

Key elements

1. *back leg's forefoot pushes downward and turns (heel is raised) (1)*
2. *back leg is straightened and pushes downward (A)*
3. *hips turn (2)*
4. *shoulders turn*
5. *punching arm is whipped upward (3)*



TIIP TRONG, STRAIGHT FRONT KICK

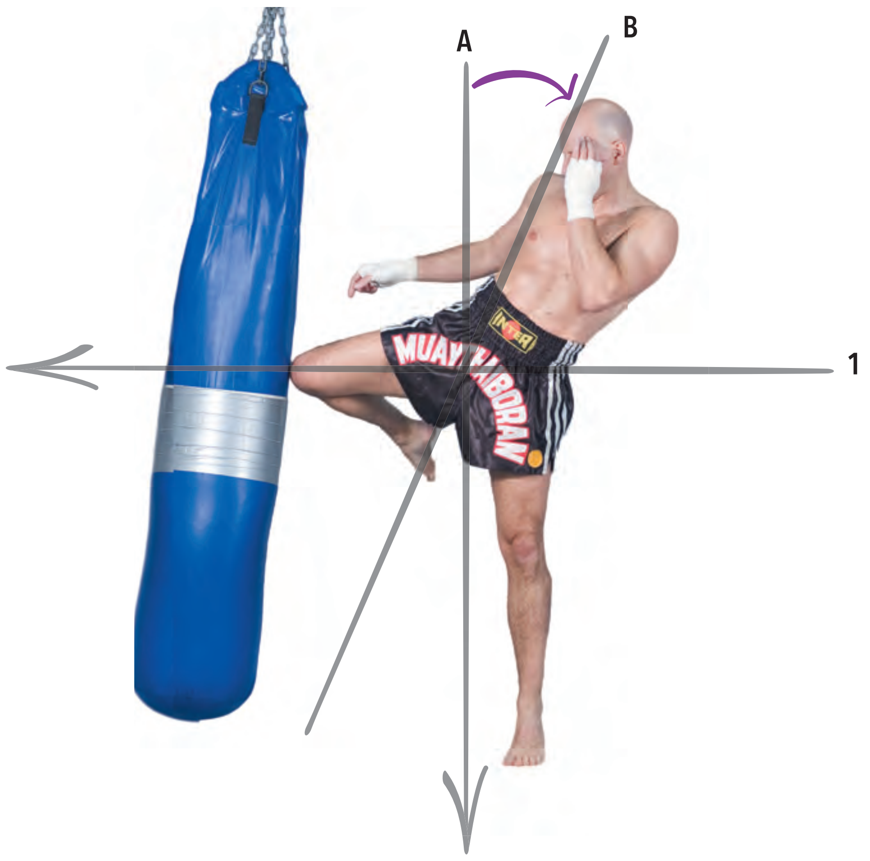
Key elements

1. *front leg pushes downward (A)*
2. *hips turn and thrust the kicking leg forward (1)*
3. *upper body twists*
4. *standing leg's heel is raised (optional)*
5. *kicking leg is thrust forward and snapped back after contact (2)*

TAE DTAD, HORIZONTAL ROUND KICK

Key elements

1. *front leg pushes downward (A)*
2. *forefoot pushes downward and turns (heel is raised) (1)*
3. *standing leg is fully straightened*
4. *hips turn (2)*
5. *upper body twists*
6. *kicking leg is kept relaxed and is swung around*



KAO TRONG, STRAIGHT KNEE

Key elements

1. *front leg's forefoot pushes downward (heel is raised)*
2. *front leg pushes downward (A)*
3. *standing leg is fully straightened*
4. *arms are jerked downward (1a)*
5. *kicking knee is lifted upward (1b)*

KAO CHIENG, DIAGONAL KNEE

Key elements

1. *front leg's forefoot pushes downward (heel is upraised)*
2. *front leg pushes downward (A)*
3. *standing leg is fully straightened*
4. *hips turn and push forward (1)*
5. *upper body turns and leans back (B)*
6. *kicking knee is lifted up and thrust forward*

SOK NGAD, UPPERCUT ELBOW

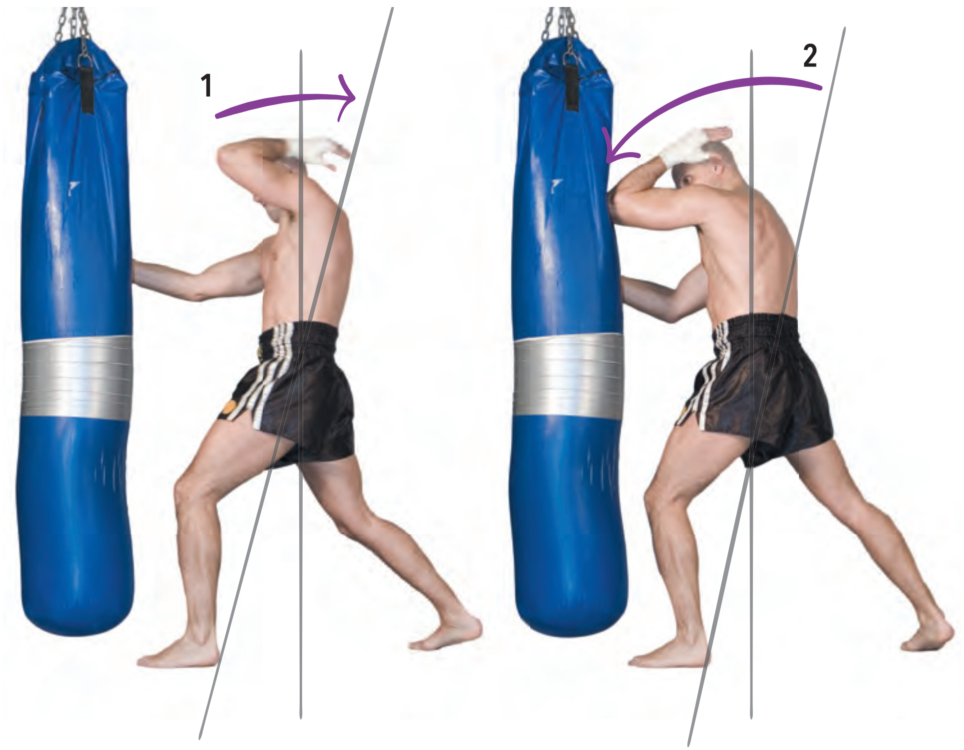
Key elements

1. *front leg is straightened and pushes downward (A)*
2. *front leg's foot pushes downward (heel may be upraised)*
3. *hips turn and push forward (1)*
4. *shoulders turn*
5. *striking arm is swung upward (2)*

SOK DTI, DIAGONAL ELBOW

Key elements

1. *back leg's forefoot pushes downward and turns (heel is raised) (1)*
2. *back leg is straightened and pushes downward (A)*
3. *hips turn (2)*
4. *shoulders turn*
5. *striking arm is swung diagonally downward (3)*



SOK SAHB, JABBING DOWN ELBOW

Key elements

1. *striking arm is swung upward (1)*
2. *front leg's heel is raised (optional)*
3. *upper body bends forward*
4. *striking arm is thrust downward (2)*

TRAINING PILLAR N.1: PHYSICAL CONDITIONING

TRAINING PILLAR N.2: IMPACT TRAINING

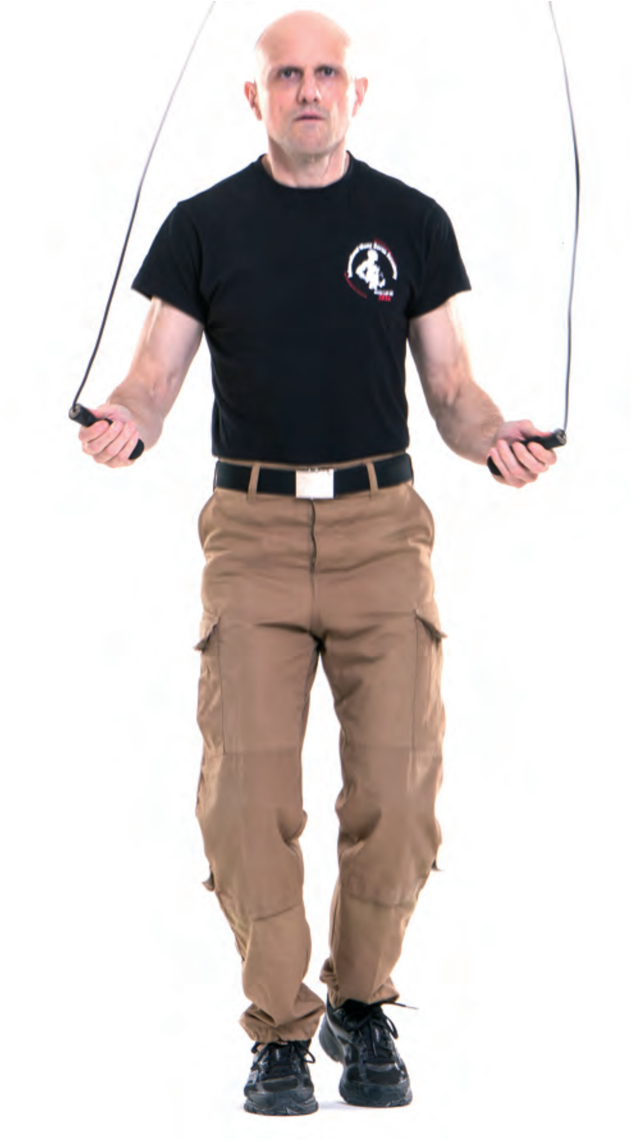
TRAINING PILLAR N.3: SPARRING

TRAINING PILLAR N.4: COMBAT FORMS

TRAINING PILLAR N.1: PHYSICAL CONDITIONING

Fighting fitness is based on four main components: Endurance Training, Power Training, Bone Conditioning and Energy Drills. Among the many ways to train a fighter's body, the main distinction that must be made is between general fitness and technique specific drills.
A typical example of general fitness exercise is road work, that is running on the road, as every combat sports practitioner knows. Likewise, calisthenics are one of the best ways to develop overall functional strength for athletes who need to increase their power without building up excessive muscle mass.
The second category of drills is meant to train specific combat-oriented attributes. Shadow boxing, neck and forearms strengthening as well as all bone conditioning drills; these are technique specific exercises designed to forge a fighter's body in order to prepare him for battle. Let's look at some of those training systems in detail.

ENDURANCE TRAINING (running, skipping rope, shadow boxing). General endurance training starts with cardiovascular exercises and is based on road work (possibly integrated by jumping rope) which must be performed in the middle-distance running mode (3000 meters distance) repeated at least two to three times a week.



SKIPPING ROPE

Another endurance training drill which develops specific combative attributes, is called shadow boxing (Dtoi Lom), and consists of solo execution of series of attacks, steps and dodges carried out while moving in space.

DTOI LOM - KAO

An important element in performing this exercise is to develop a sense of enemy, visualizing a real opponent against whom the athlete pretends to fight. Shadow boxing training may be performed in freestyle or pre-arranged modes: in the latter, techniques are pre-determined and must be trained according to a strict order and in conformity with predefined execution patterns (see Combat Forms on page 108).

DTOI LOM - MAHD

A more demanding system of execution of Dtoi Lom consists in performing the exercise using hand weights (1 kg). The slight weight increase helps to better develop shoulder and back muscle endurance and improves explosiveness in all kinds of punches.

DTOI LOM - TIIP

POWER TRAINING (pushups, leg squats, neck bridge, bar pull ups or rope climbing, forearm exercises). Calisthenics or light weights exercises are always the best choice: neck, forearms, shoulders, back, abdominals and quadriceps are the muscles on which training must be focused. The goal is to get a strong muscular structure both resistant and explosive to best execute Muay techniques. For centuries, the three most important calisthenics techniques used to condition fighters' bodies, derived from ancestral Hindu traditions, have been leg squats, pushups and neck bridging. Executed together in this order, they develop the entire body of boxers and wrestlers, from the neck to the lower legs. Performing long series (3 or 4 series, up to 50 reps) of leg squats without stopping builds strength in the legs and lower back, as well as optimal cardiovascular endurance. Following up with the same amount of pushups, every athlete will boost his strength in the upper body and core muscles as well as developing great stamina. Last but not least, the so called wrestler's bridge, represents one of the best overall exercise for all kinds of fighters.

FINGERTIPS PUSH UPS

FRONT NECK BRIDGE

BACK NECK BRIDGE

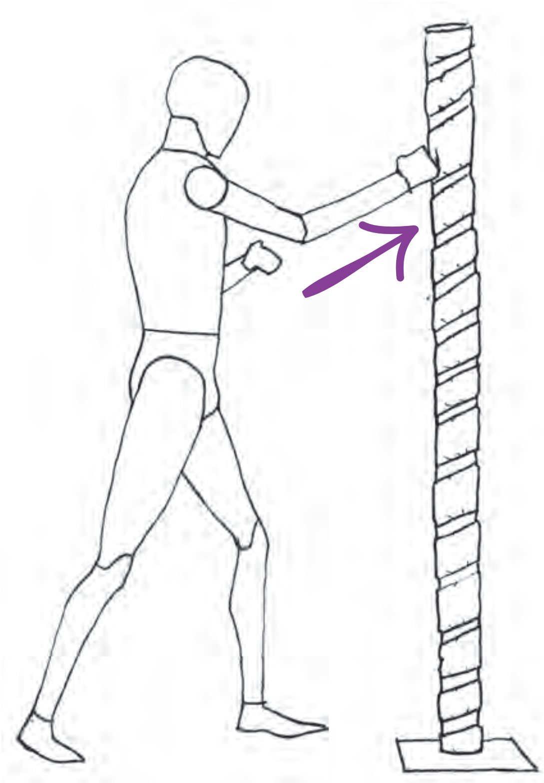
In fact, besides building up great neck strength, it increases back flexibility together with superior core muscles, legs and back strength.
Forearm strength is essential for gripping and holding; moreover, strong and flexible wrists are one of the most important attributes for bare knuckles punching. Fingertips pushups and specific training with an ancient tool usually called wrist roller, are the best ways to develop great forearms and hand strength.

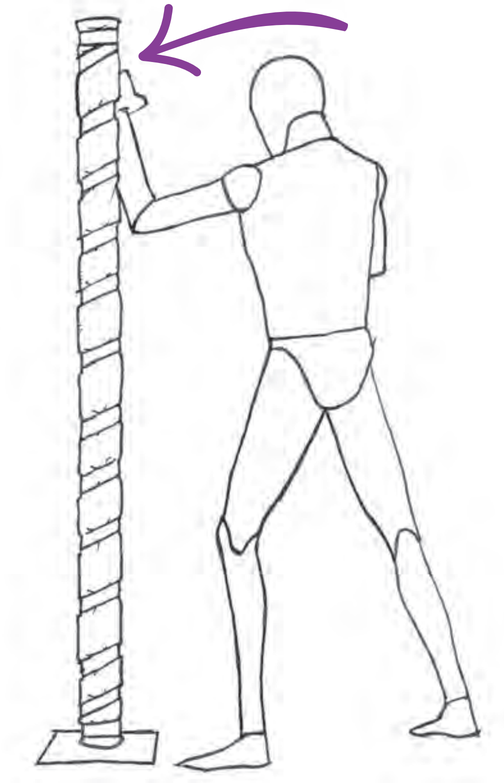
FOREARM ROLL TRAINING

BONE CONDITIONING (hands, forearms, elbows, knees, shins). Possessing hard and resistant bones is a fundamental prerequisite for high performance in executing Muay Boran techniques. A blow that's carried out by using a conditioned body part (such as a forearm with an extremely resistant ulnar bone) will produce significant damage to the opponent. The same applies if the natural weapon is used for an aggressive defense, damaging the attacker in the process of executing specific defensive movements.

The **Iron Post** is the privileged tool for this kind of workout. In order to harden his bones, the trainee must hit the post with a single arm or leg strike, repeating the strike until the desired number is reached. Each strike is executed with the uttermost correct form, employing a rotation of hips and shoulder, avoiding any unnecessary muscle tension.

However, readers must be warned not to practice bone conditioning exercises without the supervision of a trained instructor, otherwise bringing upon very serious damage. In fact, the amount and quality of these workouts are strictly individual and must be indicated by a Master who knows perfectly the characteristics and needs of each student.





ENERGY DRILLS. Most of the offensive and defensive techniques of Muay Boran IMBA may be classified according to the type of Energy (***Phalang***) that they derive from: each body gesture can be "polished" in order to express one's psychophysical energy with maximum effectiveness by making it usable for combat purposes.
From an in-depth study of the most instinctive gestures (**Gross Motor Skills**), that are easily implemented even if someone is exposed to intense stress and adrenaline rush, it has been shown that such actions result from a limited number of energy uses. Through a careful process of selection and rationalization, such movements have naturally been transformed into gestures aimed at expressing explosive attacks or quick defensive actions.
The result of this analysis has given rise to eight **Basic Energy Principles**, which in turn, fluidly combined, produce an almost infinite number of combat actions. In fact, every Energy Principle gives rise to numerous ways of employment of the Nine Natural Weapons to strike or block, as well as many throwing (Tum Tap) and joint breaking (Chap Hak) maneuvers.
One of the fundamental tasks of a good Muay Boran IMBA teacher is to train his students to understand the Eight Principles and to practice them daily. Through a series of simple exercises executed regularly with or without hand weights or otherwise employing specific apparatus (iron bars, heavy clubs and the like), a boxer's "fighting energy" may be increased drastically.

This special kind of energy that comes into play in all-out combat is called ***Phalang Yuth*** (Battle Energy) according to Siamese tradition. Due to its great power, the keys to its development have been regarded for centuries as a secret to be kept hidden. Nowadays, energy training is a crucial element of the physical conditioning stage of each Muay Boran IMBA workout: in everyday classes, Som Phalang drills are commonly employed as specific warm up exercises, followed by Impact Training and Combat Forms practice.

Energy drills are usually executed on the spot (some of them may involve a specific footwork, but the description of this kind of practice is not included in this volume). In order to execute the basic drills properly, the trainee has to understand completely the dynamics involved in the following fundamental postures:

- **Tah Song Khum (two points position)**
- **Tah Saam Khum (three points positions)**
- **Tah Khru (master stance or one point position)**

TAH SONG KHUM (TWO POINTS POSITION)

TAH SAAM KHUM (THREE POINTS POSITIONS)

TAH KHRU
(MASTER STANCE OR ONE POINT POSITION)

Moreover, he must become proficient in switching from one position to the other smoothly and harmoniously. Once the positions are mastered, the teacher will introduce the trainee to the various hand and leg maneuvers that will actually work as a "trigger" in order to put the boxer's inner energy in motion.
Each coach must know perfectly the function of each maneuver in order to apply them to the specific energy pattern he wants to train.

In the images are illustrated the three basic positions that have to be employed during most Som Phalang routines.

TRAINING PILLAR N.1: PHYSICAL CONDITIONING

TRAINING PILLAR N.2: IMPACT TRAINING

TRAINING PILLAR N.3: SPARRING

TRAINING PILLAR N.4: COMBAT FORMS

TRAINING PILLAR N.2: IMPACT TRAINING

Heavy bag work (Som Krasop).
Hitting the heavy bag is the fundamental exercise for training "heavy" blows that can injure your opponent, whatever natural weapon may be employed to produce the impact. Hands, feet, shins, elbows, knees and, to a much lesser extent, even the head, have to hit a bag on an almost daily basis to get explosive strikes, a solid bone structure and reactive and enduring muscles. Moreover, for most thai boxers hitting the heavy bag represents the best way to experiment new techniques: striking a static target makes the development of proper execution of arm or leg strikes, a lot easier. By working the heavy bag all boxers can develop better footwork: finding the correct range for each strike (long range for kicks, middle range for punches and long knees, short range for elbows and short knees) is a vital attribute that can be greatly improved with bag work.

Hitting power is greatly increased by regular heavy bag practice: working on single blows (one punch, one straight kick, one round kick, one knee blow, one elbow strike) all boxers may develop penetration and snap in strikes, a fundamental attribute for any fighter.
However, the heavy bag may not be the best training tool as far as accuracy in striking is concerned (and all boxers know that accuracy is an essential component of efficient knock-out striking). Nevertheless, through proper visualization, even the heavy bag can be turned into a very efficient training device, as far as accurate striking is concerned.

KAO TRONG - *straight knee. Grab the bag with two hands: the knee blow is executed while simultaneously pulling with both arms. Aim at the middle of the bag.*

Look carefully at image A: a long heavy bag may be divided into six zones, two high, two middle and two low quadrants.

- The two high zones represent the left (HL) and right (HR) sides of the head. These areas can be attacked with round and uppercut punches, horizontal, vertical, spinning or piercing elbows, swing kicks and jumping blows (punches, knees, elbows and kicks).
- The two middle zones represent the left (ML) and right (MR) sides of the body. These areas may be attacked with round and uppercut punches, middle swing kicks, straight, diagonal and horizontal knee strikes and piercing and cutting elbows.
- The two lower zones represent the left (LL) and right (LR) legs and may be attacked with low swing kicks on the outer part and with straight knee strikes and straight kicks on the front part.
- The C line represents the body's center line where many vital targets lie, such as the eyes, nose, chin, throat, in the high zone (those points may be attacked with straight punches, piercing, lever up and smashing elbows and with high straight kicks); in the middle zone lie the sternum, solar plexus and abdomen (use straight punches, straight and diagonal knees and straight kicks to attack that area). The lower part of the center line represents the groin and may be attacked with low straight kicks and straight knees for best results.

Keep this image in mind when you strike the heavy bag and you will add great accuracy to your blows, along with power and penetration.

KAO CHIENG – *diagonal knee. Working this blow on the bag, train your hips' forward push, hitting the middle part of the bag.*

KAO DTAD – *horizontal knee. Throw your knee forward following a wide circular path. Hit the middle or top part of the bag.*

KAO DTI- *short round knee. Embrace the bag and bang the inside part of your knee against the middle or lower portion of the striking tool.*

KAO KRATAI – *lower knee. Target the bag's lower part and hit with a straight forward knee kick.*

KAO LOI – *jumping knee. Jump up and push your hips forward hitting the upper part of the bag.*

KAO KOO – *double knee. Grab the top part of the bag with two hands, jump up and hit with both knees simultaneously.*

1 **MAHD TRONG** – *straight punch. Hit the bag along the centerline with a fast jab or cross punch, coming back to your guard position after each strike.*

2 **MAHD WIANG SAN** – *short swing punch. Hit the central part (body) or the upper part of the bag (face) with snappy hooks.*

3 **MAHD GLAB LANG** – *spinning back punch. Fake a straight punch and spin around, hitting the bag with the knuckles or the side of your hand.*

SOK DTI – *diagonal elbow. Make a short step forward and hit diagonally downward with the tip of your elbow the upper part of the bag.*

SOK PUNG – *piercing elbow. Hold your arm with the tip of your elbow pointing at the bag. Step forward and stab the bag (middle or upper part).*

SOK SAHB 1/2 – *jabbing down elbow. Hold the side of the bag with one hand and hit the upper part of the bag from up to down with the tip of your elbow.*

SOK GLAB LANG – *spinning back elbow. Fake a jab, step diagonally forward, spin around and deliver your elbow strike (horizontal, downward or upward) aiming at the upper part of the bag.*

GRADOT SOK – *jumping elbow. Jump up and forward and hit with a diagonal downward elbow strike the upper part of the bag. Add a straight knee, if you wish.*

TAE DTAD LAAN – *low swing kick. Step forward and hit with your shin the lower (and harder) part of the bag.*

TAE DTAD GLAN – *middle swing kick. Deliver a round-house shin kick hitting the middle portion of the bag.*

TAE DTAWAD – *downward swing kick. Throw your leg following a downward path, hitting with your instep the upper part of the bag.*

GRADOT TAE – *jumping swing kick. Fake a jab, jump on the spot and turn your hips with a snap, hitting the upper part of the bag with your shin.*

TIIP TRONG LAAN – *low straight kick. Push forward your hips and kick forward hitting the lower part of the bag's centerline with your forefoot or heel.*

TIIP TRONG GLAN – *middle straight kick. Push forward your hips and kick forward hitting the middle part of the bag's centerline with your forefoot or sole of the foot.*

TIIP TRONG BOON – *high straight kick. Throw your leg following an upward path, hitting the upper part of the bag's centerline with your forefoot.*

GRADOT TIIP TRONG – *jumping straight kick. Jump up on the spot and straight kick the upper part of the bag's centerline with the sole of your foot.*

Proper form is enhanced by half speed execution of single strikes or short combinations: the best way to learn the Art of combination striking (**Phasom Muay**) is through bag work. The boxer must carefully rehearse each series of blows until muscle memory is developed, never sacrificing form in order to throw a more powerful strike.
The possible combinations of hands, legs, knees and elbows blows are innumerable; each athlete will develop his best series of strikes, according to his mental and physical characteristics.

In the following images a few examples of basic combinations of strikes on the heavy bag are shown.

Example 1:
TIIP TRONG GLAN/TAE DTAD GLAN/KAO TRONG. *Right straight kick followed by a right middle swing kick and a left straight knee.*

Example 2:
TIIP TRONG LAAN/TAE DTAWAD BOON/SOK DTI. *Low left straight kick followed by a high right downward swing kick and a right diagonal down elbow.*

Example 3:
TIIP TRONG BOON/TAE DTAD LAAN/GRADOT SOK. *High left straight kick followed by a low right swing kick and a jumping right elbow slash.*

One of the key attributes for every fighter is balance, that must be strictly maintained during the execution of each step, dodge or strike. Each hour spent working the bag will greatly benefit his ability to always move and hit with appropriate balance.
Moreover, if the exercise of heavy bag hitting is prolonged for several minutes at a high pace, the boxer's breathing and circulatory systems will also truly benefit from that practice. Striking the bag for one to three 3 minutes rounds, keeping a high rhythm, throwing each blow with maximum commitment, will put to the test even the best fighters' physical condition.
Timing, accuracy, coordination, fluidity in movement are other key attributes that will be tremendously increased by regular heavy bag practice.

Thai pads work (**Som Pao**). *Pao mitts* are unequalled as a mean to refine the combinations of strikes and to increase the explosiveness of each attack; therefore, their use should be included in every Nak Muay's weekly training routines. By hitting these tools on a regular basis with kicks, fists, elbows and knees, great explosiveness can be developed and as a result, all blows will gain greater power. The goal is to have at one's disposal an array of fighting tools capable of annihilating the opponent with the least possible number of blows, when the latter are properly directed against the enemy's sensitive spots.
When working the pads, one of the key element to be considered is the creation of a good "feeling" between the boxer and the pad holder. Pad holding is an Art in itself: in every thai boxing or western boxing gym, the best pad men are considered a great added value to the gym's team.
Good pad holders can bring boxers to develop their footwork, timing, and coordination by feeding them the right pad at the right moment. The best pad men can actually become the boxer's best sparring partner: when the feeling between the trainer and the fighter is right, a pad work sessions becomes the closest thing to a real fight that may be reproduced without the high risks connected to receiving full power blows.

From the introduction of new techniques and strategies (**Mae Mai** and **Look Mai Muay Thai**), to the development of muscle memory involved in the execution of advanced combinations of strikes, from the shortening of the reaction time in the execution of defense and counter blows, to the development of superior cardiovascular capability. These are just a few of the many possible uses of pad work that can give a definite edge to every trainee's fighting attributes.
In Muay Thai 3 kinds of mitts are commonly used:
Pao Jiao, Pao San, Pao Phasom.

Pao Jiao Koo: two long pads strapped on the forearms. Mostly used for kicking (straight and round kicks) and for kneeing. Punches and elbow strikes can also be used, even though to a slightly lesser extent.

Four possible kinds of exercises are commonly employed by experienced fighters:

1. **Single attacks:** in this modality each blow is rehearsed over and over again, in search of perfection. A single punch may be trained for a whole 4 minutes round or it may be combined with the execution of other strikes by the same arm, by the other arm or by the legs.

2. **Combinations of strikes:** up to four strikes may be executed when training in this modality. The goal is creating muscle memory, so that each blow will flow smoothly into the next in order to unleash powerful series of strikes.

3. **Defense and counter maneuvers:** the pad man feeds the boxer with any kind of attack in order to push him to develop quick reflexes. The athlete must dodge or block the incoming blow and counter attack as quickly as possible with one or more blows. This represents one of the best overall technical exercises for every serious Nak Muay.

4. **Free style:** when a trainer and a boxer know each other very well, they are allowed to work the pads in free style mode. The trainee attacks at will and the pad man anticipates the blows coming at him and intercepts them with the pads, as he would do with his arms in a real hard sparring sessions. The only difference here is that no punches are pulled back. This is one of the most difficult yet efficient technical drill that may be employed to train a top level thai boxer.

SINGLE STRIKES (the pad man in the following images wears the standard outfit: 2 long pads, a padded belly protection, two shin guards)

MAHD TRONG TAM: *rear straight punch. Step and throw an explosive cross punch without any preliminary movement. Get back to your guard position as fast as possible.*

MAHD TRONG NAM: *lead straight punch. Step forward and throw a snappy lead punch. Get back to your guard position as fast as possible.*

MAHD WIANG NAM: *lead hook punch. Fake a right cross in order to turn your hips toward your lead leg, counter-turn and hit with a short hook punch.*

MAHD SUHY NAM: *lead uppercut punch. Step forward, turn your hips toward your lead leg, counter-turn and hit with a tight upward punch.*

MAHD SUHY DAO KOO: *double uppercut punch. Step forward and flex your knees. Straighten your legs and throw a short double upward punch.*

GRADOT CHOK: *jumping punch. Use lead straight kicks to keep distance from the pad-man. Jump up and forward and throw a straight downward punch.*

TIIP TRONG NAM: *lead straight kick. Kick straight forward, hitting with the forefoot or with the sole of the foot.*

TAE LAM TUA TAM: *rear roundhouse kick. Step diagonally forward and turn your hips explosively. Hit with your shin and instep. Hold up your guard at all times.*

KAO CHIENG: *diagonal knee kick. Step forward and hit with your rear knee. Cover your face with both arms as shown in the image.*

KAO LOI: *jumping knee kick. Use lead straight kicks to keep distance from the pad-man. Jump forward and throw a rear leg straight knee kick.*

SOK DTAD: *horizontal elbow. Step forward, turn your hips and shoulders forward and throw a rear cutting elbow strike.*

SOK GLAB LANG: *spinning back elbow. Step diagonally forward, spin quickly around and throw a horizontal back elbow strike.*

GRADOT SOK DTI: *jumping diagonal elbow. Use lead straight kicks to keep distance from the pad-man. Jump forward and throw a rear diagonal elbow slash.*

In the following series of pictures, a few possible combinations of strikes on the Long Pads are illustrated. In working combinations of strikes on the Long Pads, it is very useful to train accuracy in each blow along with explosive power. To do that, the boxer should visualize the targets he is aiming at, be it a head or body target. Each one of the combinations illustrated is accompanied by a short description of the possible targets of the various blows.

1

2

PHASOM MUAY 1: *straight left lead, rear straight right, lead left hook, rear swing kick.*

3

Targets:

1. Nose, eyes, chin, throat
2. Corner of the chin, lower jaw
3. Jaw, temple, side of neck
4. Rib cage, spleen

4

1

2

PHASOM MUAY 2: *straight left lead, rear straight right, left knee kick, rear horizontal elbow.*

3

Targets:

1. Nose, eyes, chin, throat
2. Corner of the chin, lower jaw
3. Liver, floating ribs
4. Jaw, temple, side of neck

4

1

2

PHASOM MUAY 3: *rear straight right, left knee kick, spinning back elbow strike.*

3

Targets:

1. Corner of the chin, lower jaw
2. Liver, floating ribs
3. Jaw, temple, side of neck

4

1

2

PHASOM MUAY 4: *straight left lead, rear straight right, left lead uppercut, rear horizontal elbow.*

3

Targets:

1. Nose, eyes, chin, throat
2. Corner of the chin, lower jaw
3. Chin, lower jaw, throat
4. Jaw, temple, side of neck

4

1

2

PHASOM MUAY 5: *double straight left lead, lead straight kick, jumping knee strike.*

3

Targets:

1. Nose, eyes, chin, throat
2. Nose, eyes, chin, throat
3. Solar plexus, lower abdomen
4. Breastbone, solar plexus, throat

4

1

2

PHASOM MUAY 6: *straight left lead, round left lead, rear swing kick, rear straight knee kick.*

3

Targets:
1. Nose, eyes, chin, throat
2. Jaw, temple, side of neck
3. Rib cage, spleen
4. Floating ribs, lower abdomen

4

1

2

PHASOM MUAY 7: *lead straight kick, lead straight knee, open hand push, rear swing kick.*

3

Targets:

1. Solar plexus, lower abdomen
2. Liver, floating ribs
3. Face, throat, breastbone
4. Rib cage, spleen

4

1

2

PHASOM MUAY 8: *round left lead, rear low swing kick (soft), double rear middle swing kick.*

3

Targets:

1. Jaw, temple, side of neck
2. Inside thigh muscle
3. Rib cage, spleen
4. Rib cage, spleen

4

5

6

1

2

PHASOM MUAY 9: *lead left swing, rear swing kick, lead straight kick, jumping straight punch.*

3

Targets:

1. Jaw, temple, side of neck
2. Rib cage, spleen
3. Solar plexus, lower abdomen
4. Nose, eyes, jaw

4

In the following examples of defense and counter maneuvers (Mai Kae, in Thai language) the pad man feeds the boxer with round kicks, straight kicks and swing punches. These are just a few examples of counter attacks as the possible applications of Mai Kae techniques on the Long Pads are endless. Every good trainer will be able to select the ones most suitable for his students, according to their level of expertise and their physical and mental characteristics.

1

2

3

MAI KAE 1: *Defense and counter on a rear swing kick to the head.* **Lean your upper body back and counter swiftly with a rear leg swing kick and diagonal knee.**

4

5

1

2

MAI KAE 2: *Defense and counter on a rear swing kick to the body.* ***Block the pad man's middle kick with your knee and counter with a rear leg knee, swing kick combination.***

3

4

1

2

MAI KAE 3: *Defense and counter on a rear swing kick to the body.* ***Block the pad man's middle kick with your knee and counter with a rear leg knee, swing kick combination. A final lead leg front push kick is executed to keep distance from the pad man.***

3

4

1

2

MAI KAE 4: *Defense and counter on a rear straight kick to the body.* ***Twist your hips to evade the pad man's straight kick and catch his leg. Push aside the trapped leg and counter with a straight punch, hook punch, swing kick combination.***

3

4

1

2

MAI KAE 5: *Defense and counter on a lead swing kick to the body.* ***Block the pad man's kick with your elbows and counter with a straight punch, low swing kick (soft) and middle swing kick combination.***

3

4

1

2

MAI KAE 6: *Defense and counter on a rear straight kick to the body.* ***Twist your hips to evade the pad man's straight kick and catch his leg. Push aside the trapped leg and counter with a straight knee, hook punch, horizontal elbow combination.***

3

4

1

2

MAI KAE 7: *Defense and counter on a lead swing punch to the head.* ***Block the punch with your rear elbow and your extended lead arm. Catch the pad man's neck and counter with a double knee kick combination.***

3

4

Pao San Koo: two small round mitts strapped to the hands. This is the basic tool for punches, knees and elbows training. These small mitts are without any doubt the best tool to develop quick and accurate hand actions, as well as sharp elbow blows.Single strikes may be employed but the best way to use Pao San is to throw quick combinations of punches, elbows and knee strikes, while moving back and forth, left and right. Also defense and counter maneuvers (Mai Kae) are best trained on these small mitts: the best boxers spend hours with their trainers, building up lightning fast reflexes in order to block or evade strikes while counterattacking with devastating combinations of blows.

KAE MAHD 1 - *Defense and counter on a rear swing to the head. Parry the punch from the inside and counter with a rear elbow, rear knee combination.*

1

2

3

4

5

In these pages the readers will find just a few of the countless possible counterattacks against punches, kicks, knees and elbows. Each counter is not limited to a single blow but comprises up to 3 strikes, according to the typical Muay Thai counter-fighting system.

The pad man in these images wears the basic trainer's outfit composed of two small mitts (Pao San), a body shield (a padded vest strapped around the trainer's body), two shin guards. Since small mitts are used mostly for head striking, the body shield is included in order to add body blows to the series of counterattacks illustrated.

1

2

KAE MAHD 2: - *Defense and counter on a rear straight to the head. Pre-empt the pad man's punch with a rear leg straight kick. Follow up with a straight punch, horizontal elbow combination.*

3

4

1

2

3

KAE MAHD 3: *- Defense and counter on a lead swing to the head. Parry the punch from the inside and grab the pad man's neck and arm. Counter with a double left knee combination.*

4

5

6

1

2

KAE MAHD 4: - *Defense and counter on a straight lead to the head. Counter the head punch with an upward right cross, followed by a left hook and a right uppercut.*

3

4

1

2

KAE MAHD 5: - *Defense and counter on a straight lead to the head. Parry downwards the pad man's straight lead and counter with a straight right, hooking left combination.*

3

4

1

2

KAE MAHD 6: *- Defense and counter on a straight lead to the head.*
Slip on the inside of the pad man's straight lead and counter quickly with a lead uppercut punch and a right cross.

3

4

1

2

3

4

KAE MAHD 7- *Defense and counter on a straight lead to the head. Slip on the inside of the pad man's straight lead and counter quickly with a lead hook, right cross combination. Follow up with a stepping-in lead horizontal elbow.*

5

1

2

3

4

KAE MAHD 8 - *Defense and counter on a straight lead to the head. Parry the pad man's straight lead and counter with a lead body elbow, rear body elbow combination.*

5

1

2

KAE MAHD 9: *- Defense and counter on a rear hook to the head. Counter the pad man’s punch with a stepping-in uppercut elbow. Catch the pad holder’s neck and follow up with a rear leg straight knee kick.*

3

4

1

2

3

KAE MAHD 10: - *Defense and counter on a straight lead to the head. Sidestep the pad man's straight lead and catch his arm. Counter with a left diagonal knee, left straight knee combination.*

4

5

6

1

2

KAE MAHD 11: - *Defense and counter on a rear hook to the head. Block the pad man's right hook with your lead elbow and your extended rear arm. Counter with a lead horizontal elbow, rear straight knee kick combination.*

3

4

1

2

KAE MAHD 12: - *Defense and counter on a one-two to the head. Parry the lead punch and guard against the cross, catching the pad man's neck. Counter quickly with a rear leg straight knee kick.*

3

4

1

2

KAE MAHD 13: *- Defense and counter on a rear straight to the head. Slip on the inside and counter at the same time with a piercing lead elbow. Catch the pad man's neck and unleash a powerful rear leg straight knee kick.*

3

4

1

2

KAE TIIP 1: - *Defense and counter on a rear straight kick to the body. Twist your hips to slip the kick and catch the pad man's leg. Push the trapped leg and step forward. Counter with a right cross, left hook combination.*

3

4

1

2

3

4

KAE TIIP 2: - *Defense and counter on a rear straight kick to the body. Step back and catch the pad man's foot with both hands. Push the trapped leg and step forward, kneeing with your right leg. Catch the neck and follow up with a left knee kick.*

5

1

2

3

KAE TAE 1: - *Defense and counter on a rear round kick to the body. Sidestep and catch the kicking leg under your armpit. Pull the trapped leg and counter with a right knee kick. Catch the pad man's neck and follow up with a left knee kick.*

4

5

1

2

KAE TAE 2: - *Defense and counter on a rear round kick to the body. Side step and block the kick with both of your elbows. Counter with a hook punch, uppercut punch combination.*

3

4

1

2

KAE TAE 3: - *Defense and counter on a rear round kick to the body. Sidestep and catch the kicking leg. Counter with a stabbing down elbow to the thigh (soft). Follow up with a diagonal forward step and a cutting elbow strike.*

3

4

1

2

KAE TAE 4: - *Defense and counter on a rear round kick to the leg. Stop the leg kick with a counter low straight kick to the thigh. Follow up with a right cross, left hook, right elbow combination.*

3

4

1

2

3

4

KAE TAE 5: - *Defense and counter on a rear round kick to the head. Step back and block the kick with your forearms. Counter swiftly with a right cross, left hook combination. Eventually, you can follow up with a rear leg straight knee kick*

5

1

2

KAE KAO 1: - *Defense and counter on a rear straight knee kick to the body. Step back and block the knee kick with your elbow and hand. Follow up with a lead horizontal elbow and a rear uppercut punch combination.*

3

4

1

2

KAE SOK 1: - *Defense and counter on a lead diagonal elbow to the head. Step forward and block the pad man's arm with your forearm and your hand. Slide forward and counter with a lead elbow, rear elbow combination.*

3

4

Pao Phasom: mixed pads, one long and one small. This combination of pads is commonly used by a trainer equipped with padded belly protection in order to absorb straight kicks and knees, along with punches and elbow strikes.

In recent times many trainers included the use of a padded kicking shield, hand held by the trainer. This tool is employed to develop powerful leg kicks: swing kicks to the inner and outer thigh muscles when properly executed, may be one of the ultimate weapons in the arsenal of expert thai boxers. Through regular training sessions on the kicking shield, any fighter can develop extremely powerful Low Kicks in a relatively short time. One of the best training system consists in moving around the pad man while unleashing low swing kicks from every position; while advancing, retreating, stepping diagonally forward or circling around the target. Sometimes the trainer may hold a focus glove in one hand together with a kicking shield, in order to feed the boxer with multiple targets options (high-low or punch-kick combinations).

Most trainers' outfit also comprises a pair of shin guards, in order to engage by attacking the boxer with low, middle or high round kicks.

A body shield is also a good tool to be included in a pad holder's "arsenal": body strikes (punches, knee, kicks, elbows) can be combined with high or low attacks for an all-around training experience.

PHASOM MUAY 1: *lead hook punch to the head, rear straight punch to the body, neck grab, rear leg knee kick.*

As mentioned for the Long Pads work (Som Pao Jiao), four possible kinds of exercises are commonly employed by experienced fighters when working on the Pao Phasom:

1. **Single attacks**
2. **Combinations of strikes**
3. **Defense and counter maneuvers**
4. **Free style**

In all kinds of exercises it is very useful to train accuracy in each blow along with explosive power, as it was mentioned earlier for Pao Jiao. To do that, the boxer should visualize the targets he is aiming at, be it a head, body or lower limbs target.

1

2

PHASOM MUAY 2: *hand trap and uppercut elbow, one hand neck grab, left knee kick, two hands neck grab and right knee kick.*

3

4

1

2

3

4

PHASOM MUAY 3 (KICKING SHIELD SERIES 1): *low left shin kick, low right shin kick, one hand neck grab and left knee kick, two hands neck grab and right knee kick*

5

1

2

PHASOM MUAY 4 (KICKING SHIELD SERIES 2): *low left shin kick, left knee kick, neck grab, left knee kick.*

3

4

1

2

3

MAI KAE 1: *Defense and counter on a rear swing kick to the body.* ***Sidestep and catch the kicking leg under your armpit. Counter immediately with a rear straight punch. Pull the trapped leg and follow up with a rear leg straight knee kick. Catch the pad man's neck and follow up with one more straight knee kick.***

4

5

1

2

3

4

MAI KAE 2: *Defense and counter on a lead straight punch to the head.* ***Slip on the inside the pad man's straight lead and counter quickly with a lead uppercut punch and a right leg straight knee. Catch the pad man's neck and follow up with a left leg straight knee kick.***

5

Iron post

The most peculiar tool used by Muay Boran IMBA practitioners to condition to the highest level the hands (knuckles, edge of hand, palm), forearms (radial and especially ulnar bone), shins, knees and feet (forefoot and heel) is the iron post. Made of a metal core covered by a thin layer of rubber or leather, fixed to a square base that allows small oscillations, the post is a fundamental help to transform any Nak Muay's body into a real weapon. However, the use of this tool must be limited to one or two training sessions per week, starting with a limited number of strikes performed without exerting excessive power, and gradually increasing the intensity and total number of blows. By means of diligent practice, within the first 6 to 12 months the trainee will notice a marked increase in his level of bone conditioning resulting in improved impact capacity against any human body. Once a martial artist gets used to powerfully hit a metal tool, he is more than ready to attack human bones and muscles without any fear of injury but rather feeling able to break through any defense the opponent may put in place.

When starting impact training on the post, it is advisable to first begin with very basic routines; each strike has to be coordinated with proper footwork, adjusting the distance from the tool according to the body weapon used (long, middle or short range striking).

The striking techniques most commonly employed on the post are: straight vertical punches, ulnar side forearm blows, palm strikes, outside edge of hands (open or closed hand) strikes, shin and forefoot strikes **(see images 1 to 8)**.

Start your training sessions with single arm and leg strikes; as you become more proficient add some basic combinations, such as:

- Left straight punch-right straight punch
- Left straight punch-left forearm strike
- Right straight punch-right straight kick
- Right swing kick-right forearm strike
- Right heel of the hand strike-left heel of the hand strike.

The final stage is represented by free style practice: move back and forth, left and right and throw strikes at the post according to your distance from the tool. Treat the post as a real opponent and you'll get the best out of this training device.

1. TOI TRONG NAM: *vertical straight punch, lead hand*

2. TOI TRONG TAM: *vertical straight punch, rear hand*

Stand with your feet parallel (**Ta Song Khum** or two points position) or in the basic guard position (**Ta Saam Khum** or three points position) at arm's length distance from the post. Throw a left lead vertical punch into the upper portion of the post and follow up with a right rear vertical punch to the same target. Three knuckle landing (pinkie, ring and middle finger) should be employed for both strikes. Each blow should hit through the target as penetration is required to develop a destructive punch. Exhale as you punch.

3. FAD SON KAEN KUA:
right forearm strike (ulnar side)

4. FAD SON KAEN SAI:
left forearm strike (ulnar side)

Step forward with your right leg and assume the right guard position. Turn your trunk slightly to the left to prepare the following strike and then swing your right forearm (ulnar side) diagonally downward into the upper portion of the post. The power is generated through a swift turn of your hips and upper body: the arm is swung into the target and brought back immediately to the original guard position. Withdraw your right leg and step in with your left leg. Strike the post with your left forearm. Exhale as you strike.

5. KAMAE KHAM SAO:
heel of the hand strike

Stand before the post with your feet parallel and with your hands in front of your body in the basic palm to palm position. Strike forward with your right palm impacting with the heel of the hand against the upper portion of the post. Pull your right hand back and strike with your left palm. Each strike follows a diagonal upward path to the target. Exhale as you strike.

6. WIANG KHAENG LAAN:
low roundhouse shin kick

Stand at leg's length from the post and assume the left forward guard position. Swing your hips forward and strike the lower part of the post with your right shin bone. Step back and repeat the strike for the desired number of repetitions. Switch legs and repeat the process with the left leg. Exhale on each strike.

7. CHAD KAA NAM:
lead straight kick (forefoot)

8. CHAD KAA LANG:
rear straight kick (forefoot)

Stand before the post with your feet parallel at leg's length from the tool.
Throw your left leg straight forward hitting the lower portion of the post with the forefoot. Snap the leg back quickly without bringing the foot to the ground. Repeat the process for the desired number of repetitions.
Switch to the right leg and repeat the exercise. Alternatively you can switch leg after each kick (left-right-left-right) bringing the foot down after each strike. Exhale on each kicking action.

It must never be forgotten that the real secret to achieving permanent results is to be able to avoid injuries to any part of the body that is used to hit the pole: an athlete who is too "impatient" and does not want to follow the right alternation of practice and physiological recovery time, will only damage his body and eventually will feel disappointed.

He who looks for miracle results coming in a short time will end up having to totally suspend training, possibly for lengthy periods.

Therefore, even for the use of this tool, see what is specified on page 21, regarding the need for close supervision by a qualified Master.

TRAINING PILLAR N.1: PHYSICAL CONDITIONING

TRAINING PILLAR N.2: IMPACT TRAINING

TRAINING PILLAR N.3: SPARRING

TRAINING PILLAR N.4: COMBAT FORMS

TRAINING PILLAR N.3: SPARRING

Prearranged Sparring Len Chern (with strikes, holds, takedowns). The prearranged sparring system (i.e. the realistic execution of pre-arranged attacks and free or predetermined defenses and single or multiple counters) is traditionally used in Martial Arts in order to rehearse potentially dangerous techniques and strategies without risking the practitioners' safety. Knowing in advance one's partner's moves allows providing adequate defenses while maintaining a high level of adrenaline in martial arts practice. The purpose of this kind of training is learning to solve the most common fighting problems: familiarizing with different kinds of opponents and practically learning how to defend and counter against various offensive techniques, has an incomparable value.

In order to develop muscle memory and quick reflexes, the trainee has to undergo long sessions of prearranged sparring: starting with attacks and defenses executed on the spot and then applying the techniques while moving around. Without fear of being hurt, even novice boxers will speed up their learning process, quickly acquiring real fighting capabilities within a limited amount of time.

Typical examples of prearranged sparring are as follows: in the images, **fighter B** "plays" the trainee and wears only a pair of boxing gloves. **Fighter A** "plays" the trainer and wears a basic outfit composed of boxing gloves, a body shield and a pair of shin guards.

EXAMPLE 1:

FIGHTER A (ON THE RIGHT): *is allowed to hook freely to the head, with left or right hand*
FIGHTER B (ON THE LEFT): *blocks with elbows, closes in and counters with knee strikes to the body*

EXAMPLE 2:
FIGHTER A (ON THE LEFT): *is allowed to jab and attack freely with low kicks, left or right leg*
FIGHTER B (ON THE RIGHT): *blocks with knees and shins and counters with knee strikes or head punches*

EXAMPLE 3:

FIGHTER A (ON THE LEFT): *is allowed to throw horizontal elbow strikes to the head, with left or right arm (Elbow pads should be used always for this kind of exercise)*
FIGHTER B (ON THE RIGHT): *blocks with forearms and counters with short knee strikes to the abdomen*

EXAMPLE 4:

FIGHTER A (ON THE RIGHT): *is allowed to hook to the body, with left or right hand*

FIGHTER B (ON THE LEFT): *blocks with elbows and counters with head punches and knee strikes to the body*

EXAMPLE 5:
FIGHTER A (ON THE LEFT): *is allowed to throw round kicks to the body freely, with left or right leg*
FIGHTER B (ON THE RIGHT): *catches the kicking leg and counters with head punches or knee strikes*

EXAMPLE 6:
FIGHTER A (ON THE LEFT): *keeps distance and stops with front kicks, left or right leg*
FIGHTER B (ON THE RIGHT): *deflects the stop kicks and closes in, counters with knees or kicks to the body*

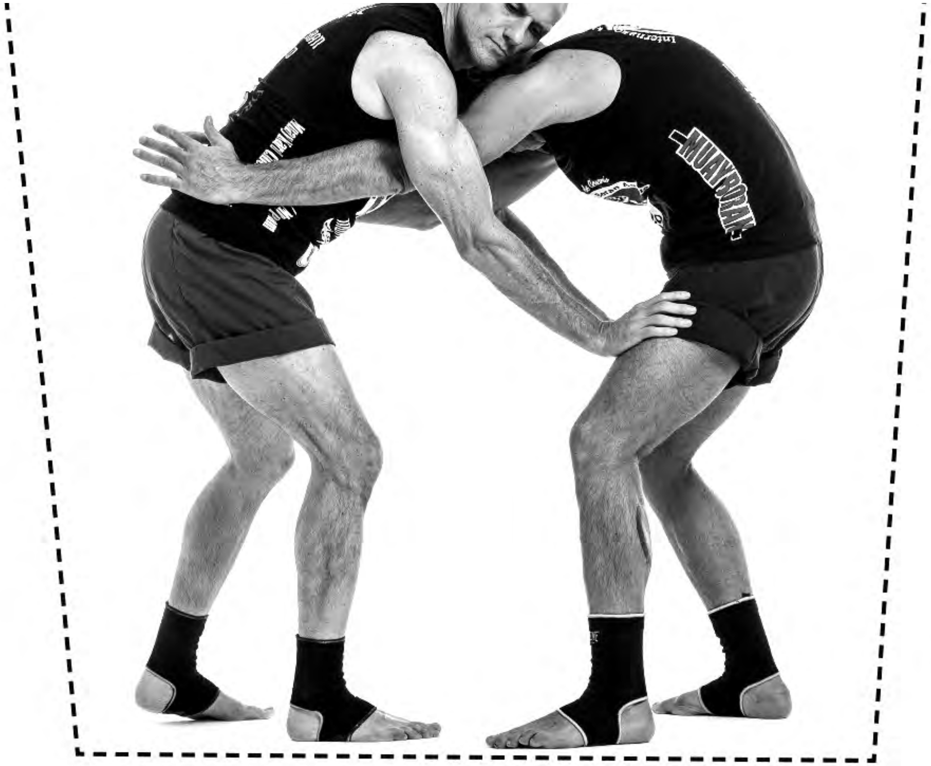
EXAMPLE 7:
FIGHTER A: *keeps distance and throws front and round kicks*
FIGHTER B: *blocks and steps in, throwing head punches*

EXAMPLE 8:
FIGHTER A: *throws left and right straight punches to the head*
FIGHTER B: *sidesteps and counters with middle or low round kicks*

EXAMPLE 9:
FIGHTER A: *jabs to the face*
FIGHTER B: *stop hits with a jab or a lead leg push kick*

EXAMPLE 10:
FIGHTER A: *kicks the body, left or right leg*
FIGHTER B: *blocks with both elbows and counters with hooks to the head*

However, due to the intrinsic risk of being hit by one's partner during any kind of sparring sessions, it is always mandatory to be supervised by an experienced instructor.



Thai Grappling training (Pram Wong Nai)

Because Muay Boran training is meant to prepare practitioners for all ranges, and especially for close range combat, it's crucial to learn how to master close quarters situations. At a short distance from the opponent the techniques that are best applied are neck and body locks, unbalancing maneuvers, throws, knee and elbow strikes; the bread and butter of every expert Nak Muay.

The best exercise to learn how to grapple is, of course, just "grappling".
Many are the hours that must be spent trying to apply the various holds on a partner who doesn't want to be submitted, thus developing tremendous strength, endurance and sensitivity; those are the core attributes of a good Muay Boran student.

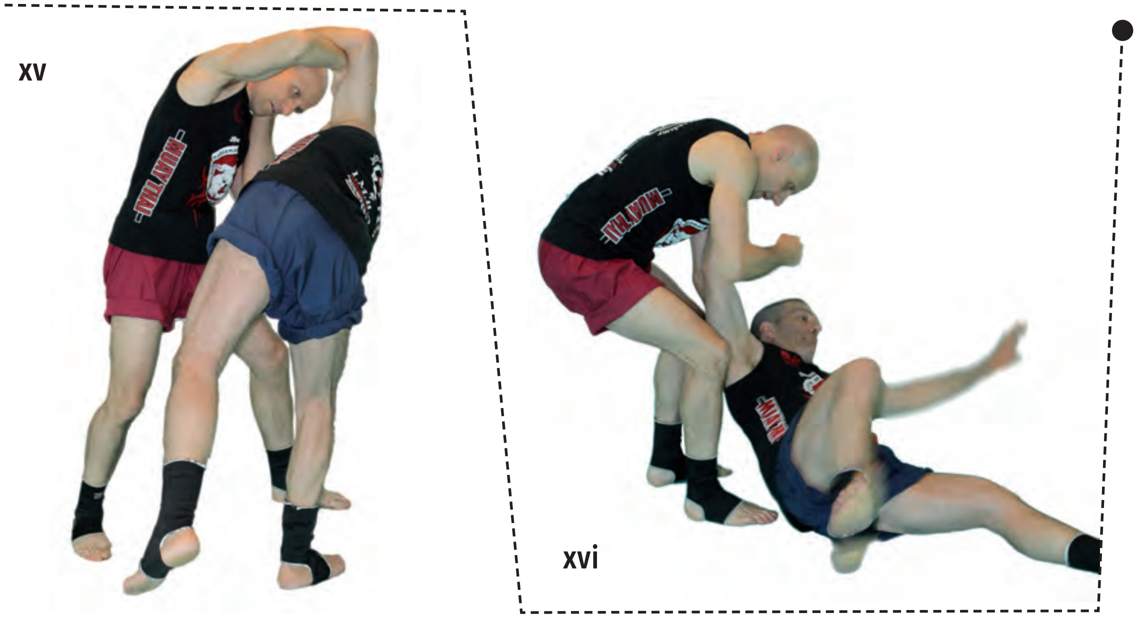
Some examples of attacks and counters at grappling range are as follows:

The fighter on the right (blue) holds the waist of the opponent (1).

The fighter on the left (red) pushes his hips back and lowers his center of gravity pushing on blue's upper thighs (2).

Red holds onto blue's triceps (3) and counters with a straight knee kick (4).

Blue holds red under his armpits (a). Red lowers his center and pushes down his arms (b). Red puts one arm inside the gap between him and blue (c) and follows with the second arm to complete the hold around blue's body (d). Red steps back with one leg (e) and knees blue's abdomen with his rear leg (f).



Blue (on the left) has his arms on the inside of red's guard (xi). As blue starts to knee with his back leg, red pushes forward his hip hitting blue's inner thigh and groin (xii). Red follows up with a quick counter turn (xiii) that unbalances blue (xiv), throwing him to the ground (xv).

Free sparring (Som Khu)

Harder contact free style sparring is practiced more seldom than Len Chern. Professional fighters spar on a regular basis when preparing for a contest and increase the amount of rounds as training camp progresses.
When Thai boxers spar in the free style mode, they usually do it using only their hands, just as western boxers do. In fact, the speed expressed by hand blows is higher than any other kind of technique: that is why it is so important for a Nak Muay to develop good reflexes against a fast punch. Boxing with different partners is an excellent exercise to develop quick reflexes, reinforce one's ability to handle difficult situations and give fluidity and speed to all arms strikes.

Headgear, big training gloves (16 oz.), groin cup, mouth piece are mandatory when facing a partner for free sparring. Even if this kind of training is definitely harder than Len Chern, all blows must never be full power, controlled attacks are mandatory. Sparring is not fighting, it is about improving one's skill together with one's partner, not about hurting others or showing one's superiority.

No Som Khu session is allowed without careful instructor's supervision.

TRAINING PILLAR N.1: PHYSICAL CONDITIONING

TRAINING PILLAR N.2: IMPACT TRAINING

TRAINING PILLAR N.3: SPARRING

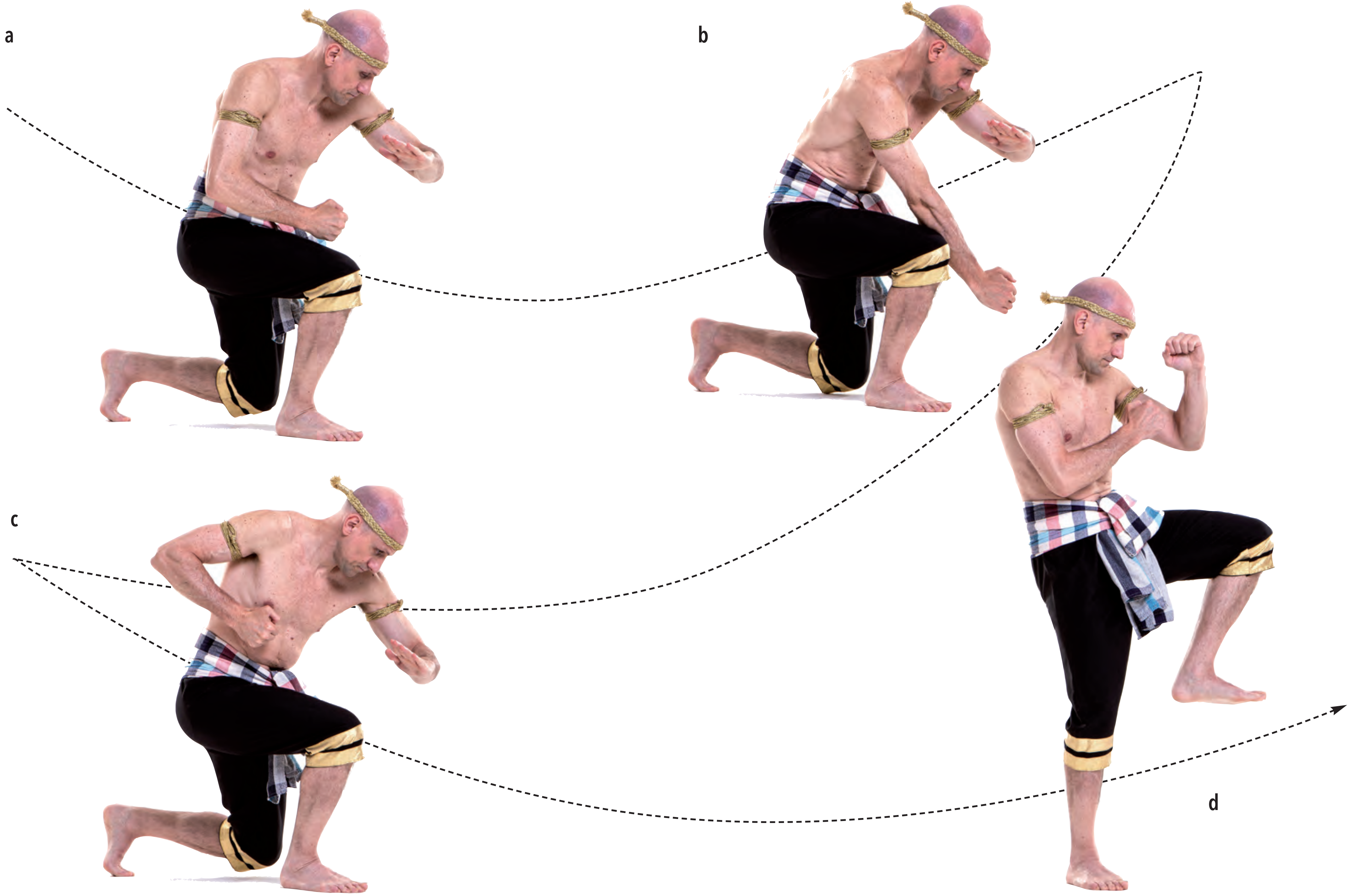
TRAINING PILLAR N.4: COMBAT FORMS

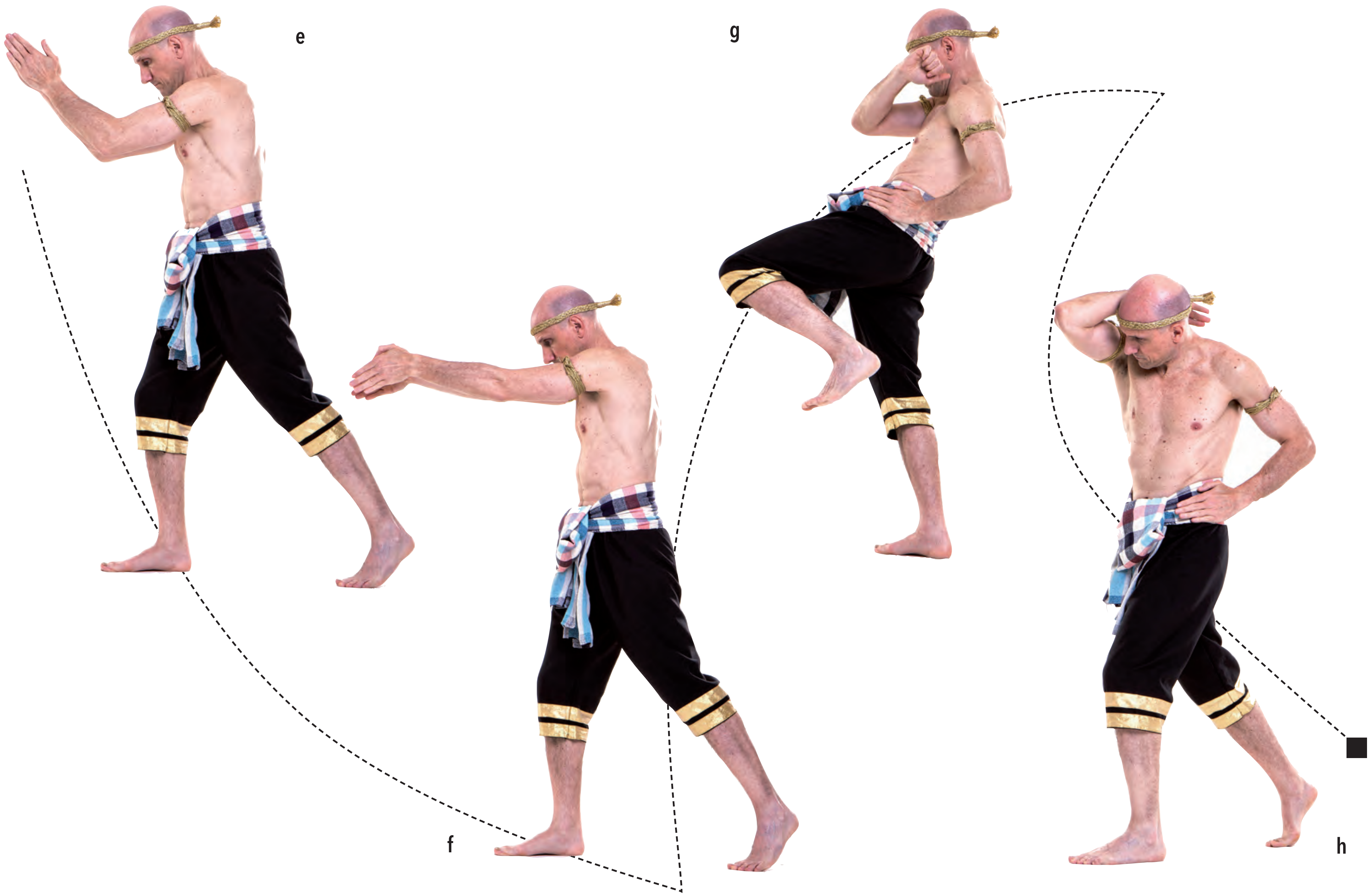
TRAINING PILLAR N.4: COMBAT FORMS

The practice of Muay Boran **solo techniques** has to be considered as one of the most important phases of training and is expressed through a series of well-coordinated defensive and offensive maneuvers executed while stepping, dodging, spinning around, jumping.

In Thai language the practice of solo sequences is labeled as **Raai Ram** (dance): the best known version of this practice is the **Ram Muay** or Boxing Dance, a pre-fight ritual performed by every thai boxer before fighting in the ring.

Combat Forms or **Ram Yuth** consist of a series of defensive and offensive maneuvers executed in combination with steps and shifts, simulating real fighting situations (**images *a* to *h*, taken from the IMBA Muay Lert Rit Form**).


a
b
c
d


e
f
g
h

Speed, fluidity, balance, cardiovascular endurance, technical accuracy, coordination, flexibility and last but not least, perfect learning of the traditional set of names used in Muay Boran, are enhanced by a regular Ram Yuth practice.

Each sequence represents an unequalled compendium of fighting principles essential for a proper transmission of the various traditional Mai Muay (fighting techniques) to one's students or training partners.

Furthermore a correct and regular practice of **Combat Forms** is good for building a harmonious physique; today as in the remote past, combat efficiency in Muay Thai practice has to go hand in hand with the fluidity and harmony expressed by each movement employed by a Nak Muay to attack and defend, in a sort of deadly combat dance.

Moreover, the practice of **prearranged sequences** reproducing real fighting situations is believed to be one of the best systems to improve the development of concentration and an optimal connection between body and mind.

During each execution, the Nak Muay performs a series of offensive and defensive movements against an imaginary opponent; nevertheless, he must do his best to visualize his enemy in order to re-create as much as possible the emotional and physical stress that take place in a fight.

That's the secret of a most efficient Ram Yuth practice (**images 1 to 7, taken from the Look Mai Muay Thai Form**).

Moreover, the practitioner must strive to perform every action with utmost fluidity, linking movements without any interruption. Through constant practice a Muay Boran student actually learns how to seamlessly combine attacks and dodges, linking strikes, steps and parries like in a real fighting situation.

In each training session, the performer must work hard to bring each technique to perfection while improving the speed, dynamic equilibrium and cardiovascular endurance of each movement.

It has also been clearly demonstrated that profound concentration during solo practice can be compared to a real form of meditation in movement.

This element is characteristic of high-level martial exercise and is common to many other eastern fighting Arts.

1. **ERAWAN SOEI NGA – ERAWAN STRIKES WITH HIS TUSKS**

Visualize your opponent throwing a straight head punch. Evade the attack and counter swiftly with Mahd Suhy (uppercut punch). Concentrate your energy on a powerful upward surge and strike with one or two uppercuts aimed at the chin of your imaginary opponent.

2. BATA LOOB PAK – THE FOOT TOUCHES THE MOUTH

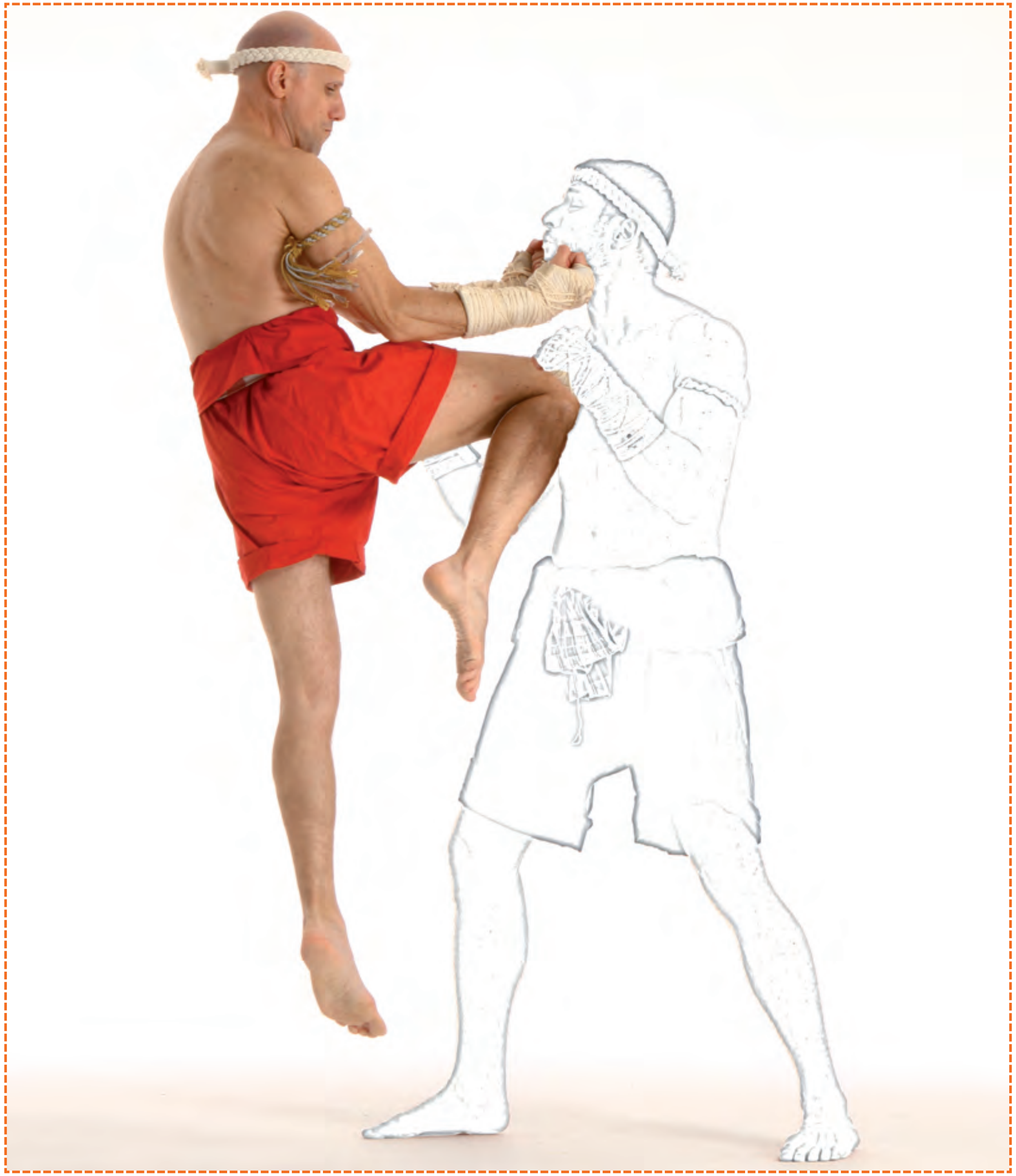
Visualize a head punch thrown at your face. Preempt the attack with a back leg straight kick aimed at the chin or face of the imaginary attacker. Press your standing foot on the ground and throw a snappy upward straight kick.

3. KHUN YAK PA NANG – THE LORD OF DEMONS KIDNAPS THE LADY.

Evade a left straight punch with a left leg diagonal step. Visualize yourself hooking the neck of the opponent with your left arm.
Lower your center of gravity and swing your arm towards the ground with a powerful downward gesture, throwing your imaginary opponent to the ground.

4. KWANG LIEW LANG – THE DEER LOOKS BACK

As your opponent is stepping forward in order to attack with a punch, turn around, look back and throw a straight back kick. Concentrate your energy in your buttocks and back muscles. Visualize yourself connecting with the opponent's throat or chin.



5. **HANUMAN TAWAI WAEN – HANUMAN PRESENTS THE RING**

Flex your knees in order to store energy in your legs. Explode upward and strike with a double uppercut and a straight knee kick. Visualize yourself hitting the opponent's throat or chin with both fists, while your knee strike connects with his breastbone.

6. HONG PEEK HAK – THE HONGSA WITH THE BROKEN WING

Visualize your opponent throwing a left punch at your face. Step diagonally forward and deflect the imaginary attack with your left arm. Jump up and on your way down, stab with the tip of your elbow, aiming at the opponent's shoulder. Bend forward your upper body and exhale powerfully when you strike.

7. FAN LOOK BUAB – SLICING THE LOOK BUAB

Visualize a lead left aimed at your face. Step forward and parry the punch with your right hand. Push your hips forward and swing your left arm upward as if you were cutting a cucumber with the tip of the elbow. Aim your elbow strike at your imaginary opponent's chin or face.

Master Marco De Cesaris

He has been a Muay Thai practitioner since 1978 and has been certified as a teacher of Muay by the Ministry of Education of Thailand (in 1991).
During his career he was an athlete, coach of professional thai boxers, judge/referee, promoter and founder of the first Italian Muay Thai Federation. In 2012 in Thailand he was awarded the 15th Khan of Muay Thai Boran (Bramarjarn or Grand Master of the Art) and Gold Mongkon by the Governor of Ayuddhaya Province.
He is the founder and technical director of the **International Muay Boran Academy (IMBA)**, the worldwide organization devoted to the development and spread of Muay Boran in the world, since 1993. IMBA is currently present in 26 countries, Europe, North America, Latin America and Australia. Master De Cesaris since 2005 has developed a modern scientific version of Muay Boran, named Muay Boran IMBA, which is based on three technical pillars: Combat Muay Boran, the most combative interpretation of the original Thai martial art's fighting skills, Muay Lert Rit, a Siamese Military Close Combat style adapted to civilian use and Muay Pram, the traditional form of thai grappling.

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COMBAT MUAY BORAN